

Ordinary Time Week 2 – Cycle A 2026

Isaiah 49:3. 5-6; Psalm 39:2.4 Cor 1:1-3; John 1:29-34

There is a sense of great connective expectation in today's Gospel. Connective between heaven and the world. Cast your mind back to the Sunday after Christmas we heard the Prologue of St John's Gospel:

*In the beginning was the Word,
And the Word was with God,
And the Word was God.*

The prologue of John's gospel is a vision of the Glory of God which is to enter into the world in the person of Jesus Christ. But this entry is to be prepared for and the man chosen to do the immediate preparation is John:

*There was a man sent from God, whose name was John.
He came as a witness, to bear witness about the light.*

As the Gospel unfolds, the character of John the Baptist is filled out as someone who is preparing the way for someone he has not yet seen. He is searching the horizon of being for an unknown. Who is coming? And because he is so strange, people wonder if he, John, is the prophet. No, *'I am not the Christ'*. I speak of him, I warn you of his coming, but I do not know Him. Then suddenly it all changes, all his preparing in the darkness of ignorance of who he is preparing for is dispelled. Jesus approaches. John exclaims "This is he...". This is he. But the truth is still bewilderingly beyond his understanding, despite the dizzying heights of his own calling to bear witness, 'Here is the Lamb of

God', this one who I have baptised with water has come to baptise with the 'Holy Spirit', 'He is the Son of God, the Chosen One'.

Then like a narrator on a stage who sets the scene and has said his piece, John's time is up, and Jesus comes into focus. The glory of God becomes visible.

What an expectation John the Evangelist has placed on John the Baptist's lips for his listeners:

*'Behold, the Lamb of God, who takes away the sin of the world!'*¹

For those attuned to Christian imagery John's exclamation draws us to the OT book of Isaiah, to the verses that we would call 'the Lord's Suffering Servant.' In the lines we hear often during Lent, Isaiah writes: *'He was oppressed, and he was afflicted, yet he opened not his mouth: like a lamb that is led to the slaughter'*.² Christians see this 'suffering servant' as a figure of Christ, and the accompanying image of Christ being like a lamb would naturally create for John's readers a reference to the Paschal lamb. What of this?

We know that The Paschal Lamb is the lamb that the Hebrew people, who are slaves in Egypt, offer in sacrifice to God so that its blood can be put on the door-ways of their houses. This blood is a signal to the angel of death sent by God not to enter, but to 'pass over' their houses. The result is that it is only the Egyptians' homes that the angel of death enters, killing all the first born, and resulting in the Hebrews being set free from their slavery and the beginning of their long journey to a new home in what would become Israel.

¹ John 1:29-34

² chapter 53 verse 7

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Of interest is the fact that the Egyptians would not likely have sacrificed or eaten a sheep themselves. Sheep were sacred to their ram-headed god 'Khnum', so the ritual slaughter of a sheep by the Hebrews would not have been kindly regarded. But it does increase the intensity of meaning in calling Jesus the 'lamb' of God, because Jesus as lamb now represents a separation from the ways and gods of Egypt (of sin) and Pharaoh (power) and by extension; those of the whole world.

By pointing to Jesus as the Lamb, John the Baptist identifies Jesus with the fulfilment of the ancient scripture of the Exodus, creating an instantaneous social and emotive association with sacrifice, & freedom. This bears more contemplation, more prayer, more awe. But, we should not go there first, although we have. Second in order, but first in priority, it is the words: 'of God'. The Man before him is 'of God'. What is He coming to do, this Jesus upon whom the Spirit descends? He is coming to set the world on fire, to live the life of God among His people, and to give the same Holy Spirit that He has, to those who will listen.

The Son of God enters into history as God's glory revealed, not in thunder and obscured by clouds, as on mount Sinai, but in the flesh of Jesus. Jesus is the new Passover, the willing sacrificial Lamb. He is God's new commandment to his people, carved not in stone, but in human flesh..

And now when we sing the *Angus Dei: 'Lamb of God who takes away the sins of the world'*, and when the priest holds up the consecrated Host, and

says '*Behold, the lamb of God*' what do you see? What do your eyes see? Your Mind? Your heart?³ More importantly, what will you do with it?

³ The Eucharistic prayer